In the Claims:

Claims 1 - 23 (canceled)

1   Claim 24 (currently amended): A method of enhancing voice mail messages by incorporating

2   one or more selected background sounds with a voice mail message for playback to a listener,

3   wherein the voice mail message comprises a plurality of message segments, and wherein each of

4   the selected background sounds is associated with one or more of the message segments, further

5   comprising the step of transmitting an address of each of the selected background sounds from a

6   telephone or telephone system used by a speaker of the voice mail message, wherein each address

7   may be used to locate a file containing a respective one of the selected background sounds and

8   The method according to Claim 23, wherein the each address is a Uniform Resource Locator.

1   Claim 25 (currently amended): A method of enhancing voice mail messages by incorporating

2   one or more selected background sounds with a voice mail message for playback to a listener,

3   wherein:

4   the voice mail message comprises a plurality of message segments;

5   each of the selected background sounds is associated with one or more of the message

6   segments;

7   the one or more selected background sounds are dynamically selected from among a

8   plurality of background sounds that are available to or from a system; and

9   the system is one of (1) a telephone or telephone system from which the voice mail

10   message originates, (2) an apparatus on which the voice mail message is recorded, and (3) a

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11   telephone company system through which the voice mail message passes as the voice mail

12   message is being left for the listener, and ~~The method according to Claim 12,~~ further comprising

13   the step of loading one or more new background sounds onto the system ~~telephone or telephone~~

14   ~~system,~~ thereby revising the plurality of background sounds that are available.

Claims 26 - 29 (canceled)

1   Claim 30 (currently amended): A method of enhancing voice mail messages by incorporating a

2   selected background sound with a voice mail message for playback to a listener. ~~The method~~

3   ~~according to Claim 1,~~ wherein the incorporating is performed by conferencing the selected

4   background sound into a 3-way call between a speaker of the voice mail message and a receiver

5   thereof.

1   Claim 31 (currently amended): A method of enhancing voice mail messages by incorporating a

2   selected background sound with a voice mail message for playback to a listener. ~~The method~~

3   ~~according to Claim 1,~~ wherein the incorporating is performed during the playback to the listener.

Claims 32 - 37 (canceled)

1   Claim 38 (currently amended): A method of enhancing voice mail messages for playback to a

2   listener, each of the voice mail messages comprising a plurality of message segments, by

3   inserting a plurality of audio files into a particular voice mail message or inserting a single audio

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4   file into the particular voice mail message multiple times, wherein at least one of the inserted

5   audio files is an audio signature associated with a speaker who records the voice mail message,

     and ~~The method according to Claim 37,~~ further comprising the step of playing the audio

7   signature rather than the voice mail message to the listener.

Claims 39 - 47 (canceled)

1   Claim 48 (currently amended): A method of improving telephone conversations, comprising

2   incorporating a selected background sound into a telephone conversation between a caller and a

3   called party, ~~The method according to Claim 46,~~ wherein the incorporating is performed by

4   conferencing the selected background sound into a 3-way call between the caller and the called

5   party.

Claims 49 - 63 (canceled)

1   Claim 64 (currently amended): A system for enhancing voice mail messages, comprising:

2   a voice mail message comprising one or more message segments;

3   one or more background sounds that are available on an apparatus;

4   means for incorporating one or more of the background sounds with one or more of the

5   message segments;

6   means for playing the voice mail message to a listener with the incorporated background

7   sounds; and ~~The system according to Claim 52, further comprising~~

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8   means for loading one or more new background sounds onto the apparatus, thereby

revising the plurality of background sounds that are available.

Claim 65 (canceled)

1   Claim 66 (currently amended): ~~The system according to Claim 52,~~ A system for enhancing voice

2   mail messages, comprising:

3   a voice mail message comprising one or more message segments;

4   one or more background sounds;

5   means for incorporating one or more of the background sounds with one or more of the

6   message segments, ~~wherein the incorporating is performed~~ by conferencing the selected

7   background sounds into a 3-way call between a speaker of the voice mail message and a receiver

8   thereof; and

9   means for playing the voice mail message to a listener with the incorporated background

10   sounds.

Claims 67 - 69 (canceled)

1   Claim 70 (currently amended): A system for improving telephone conversations, comprising:

2   means for establishing a telephone conversation between a caller and a called party; and

3   means for incorporating one or more background sounds into the telephone conversation,

4   ~~The system according to Claim 69,~~ wherein the means for incorporating further comprises means

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for conferencing the one or more background sounds into a 3-way call between the caller and the

called party.

Claims 71 - 82 (canceled)

1   Claim 83 (currently amended): A computer program product for enhancing voice mail messages,

2   the computer program product embodied on one or more computer-readable media and

3   comprising:

4   computer-readable program code means for selecting one or more background sounds:

5   and

6   computer-readable program code means for incorporating the selected background

7   sounds with a voice mail message for playback to a listener. The computer program product

8   according to Claim 72; wherein the computer-readable program code means for incorporating

9   further comprises computer-readable program code means for conferencing the selected

10   background sounds into a 3-way call between a speaker of the voice mail message and a receiver

11   thereof.

Claims 84 - 87 (canceled)

1   Claim 88 (currently amended): A computer program product for improving telephone

2   conversations, the computer program product embodied on one or more computer-readable

3   media and comprising:

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4   computer-readable program code means for selecting one or more background sounds;

5   and

6   computer-readable program code means for incorporating the selected background sounds

7   into a telephone conversation between a caller and a called party. ~~The computer program product~~

8   ~~according to Claim 86,~~ wherein the computer-readable program code means for incorporating

9   further comprises computer-readable program code means for conferencing the selected

10   background sound into a 3-way call between the caller and the called party.

1   Claim 89 (new): A computer program product for enhancing voice mail messages for playback

2   to a listener, the computer program product embodied on one or more computer-readable media

3   and comprising:

4   computer-readable program code means for incorporating one or more selected

5   background sounds with a voice mail message, wherein the voice mail message comprises a

6   plurality of message segments, and wherein each of the selected background sounds is associated

7   with one or more of the message segments; and

8   computer-readable program code means transmitting an address of each of the selected

9   background sounds from a telephone or telephone system used by a speaker of the voice mail

10   message, wherein each address may be used to locate a file containing a respective one of the

11   selected background sounds and wherein each address is a Uniform Resource Locator.

1   Claim 90 (new): A system for enhancing voice mail messages by incorporating a selected

2   background sound with a voice mail message for playback to a listener, wherein the

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3   incorporating is performed during the playback to the listener.

1   Claim 91 (new): A computer program product for enhancing voice mail messages for playback

2   to a listener, each of the voice mail messages comprising a plurality of message segments, the

3   computer program product embodied on one or more computer-readable media and comprising:

4   computer-readable program code means for inserting a plurality of audio files into a

5   particular voice mail message or inserting a single audio file into the particular voice mail

6   message multiple times, wherein at least one of the inserted audio files is an audio signature

7   associated with a speaker who records the voice mail message; and

8   computer-readable program code means for playing the audio signature, rather than the

9   voice mail message, to the listener.

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